



INTEGRATING THE DATA QUALITY ACT INTO FIS PLANNING

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515 Background

- Section 515 of the Treasury and General Government Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2001 (Public Law 106-554) is called “The Data Quality Act”
- Section 515 directed OMB to issue government-wide guidelines to “provide ... guidance to federal agencies for ensuring and maximizing the **quality**, **objectivity**, **utility**, and **integrity** of information ... disseminated by federal agencies.”
- OMB directed each federal agency to develop guidelines
- Agencies’ Guidelines effective 1 October, 2002
- NOAA’s IQ Guidelines can be found at:
<http://www.noaanews.noaa.gov/stories/iq.htm>



Requirements

- **Standards:** Information quality is a performance goal.
- **Pre-dissemination review:** Information must be developed, created, and pre-reviewed with quality standards in mind.
- **Administrative mechanism:** Affected persons may request correction of information they believe does not comply with NOAA or OMB Guidelines.
- **Reports:** Annual report on OMB on number, nature and disposition of requests for correction received



Information...in any medium or form

- Biological surveys
- Catch statistics
- Model output
- Web sites
- Damage assessments
- Third-party (e.g., states, industry) information used in NOAA products
- Speeches
- Outreach materials



Dissemination

Includes:

- any intended release or distribution to the public
- “Agency initiated”
- “Agency sponsored”

But not:

- normal academic publication, as long as it is clear that the information does *not* represent the views of NOAA



Information Quality (as defined by OMB)

- Applies to substance *and* presentation
- **Quality = Utility + Integrity + Objectivity**
- **Utility** = understandable, in context, accessible, unbiased
- **Integrity** = safe from improper access, confidentiality protected
- **Objectivity** = accurate, reliable and unbiased information presented in an accurate, clear, complete and unbiased manner.
 - Reproducibility
 - Transparency



NOAA's Sec. 515 Guidelines

- One set of guidelines for all of NOAA
- Based upon pre-existing info quality measures
- Posted on the NOAA home page under “Information Quality”
- url:

<http://www.noaanews.noaa.gov/stories/iq.htm>



Seven Categories of Information

- Original Data
- Synthesized Products
- Interpreted Products
- Hydrometeorological, Hazardous Chemical Spill, and Space Weather Warnings, Forecasts, and Advisories
- Experimental Products
- Natural Resource Plans
- Corporate and General Information



Original Data

- Data in their most basic useful form
- Data from individual times and locations that have not been summarized or processed to higher levels of analysis
- Examples: buoy data; **survey data (e.g. living marine resources)**; biological and chemical properties



Synthesized Products

- Developed through analysis of original data
- Includes: analysis through statistical methods; model interpolations, extrapolations, and simulations; and combinations of multiple sets of original data
- While some scientific evaluation and judgment is needed, the methods of analysis are well documented and relatively routine
- Examples: **summaries of fisheries landings statistics**; model outputs; data display through GIS techniques



Objectivity Standards

- Original Data:
 - Data are collected according to documented procedures or in a manner that reflects standard practices accepted by the relevant scientific and technical communities
 - Original data undergo quality control prior to being used by the agency or disseminated outside of the agency
 - Transparency regarding data collection procedures, level of quality and limitations (e.g., metadata record descriptions and explanations of the methods and quality controls used)



Objectivity Standards

- Synthesized Products
 - Data and information sources are ID'd or made available
 - Data is of known quality or from sources acceptable to the relevant scientific and technical communities to ensure validity, credibility and utility
 - Created using methods that are either published in standard method manuals, documented in accessible formats or generally accepted by the relevant scientific and technical communities
 - Reviewed to ensure that the product or the procedures used to create it are valid



Requests for Correction

- Administrative correction mechanism set forth in Part III of NOAA IQ Guidelines
- What exactly is in a request for correction?
 - "Does not comply with" our guidelines (or OMB's or DOC's)
 - Can be based on utility, integrity, objectivity (in presentation or substance)
 - May be just "incorrect"



Appeals

- AA is normally the Appeal Official. To preserve objectivity, cannot be involved in or clear initial response
- Appeals are based on content of the record produced in handling of the initial request.

3 Requests for Correction Received to Date



- Competitive Enterprise Institute (CEI) Request for Correction of the National Assessment on Climate Change (NACC)
- Atlantic Salmon of Maine (ASM) Request for Correction of Draft and Final Biological Opinions regarding impacts of salmon aquaculture operations on wild Atlantic salmon in Maine
- Associated Fisheries of Maine Request for Correction of draft Amendment 13 to New England Groundfish FMP



CEI Request for Correction

- The National Assessment on Climate Change is an interagency report, prepared with input from NOAA's National Climatic Data Center, EPA and the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP)
- OSTP assumed ownership of the NACC and denied CEI's RFC
- CEI appealed OSTP's initial denial, but received no response from OSTP on the appeal
- CEI appealed to Federal District Court in D.C. Case settled, OSTP agreed to place disclaimer on NACC, stating that it was not subjected to OSTP's IQ Guidelines



ASM Request for Correction

- Issue: Agency reliance on King Study, Utter Study, Verspoor Study, and Youngston Study
- King Study: significant genetic differences between N. Amer. and European Atlantic salmon
- Utter, Verspoor and Youngston Studies: presented negative effects of outbreeding depression caused by infiltration of wild salmon rivers by salmon from non-native, genetically divergent populations
- Collectively, studies were the basis for agency's prohibition on use of European strains of salmon in aquaculture operations in Maine



ASM RFC (cont.)

- Response team consisted of HQ and Regional staff
- Worked in coordination with FWS, co-authors of BiOps
- Interesting Twist: National Environmental Law Center filed an “Opposition” to ASM’s RFC
- OMB weighed in on draft Agency response
- Agency response to RFC upheld reliance on peer-reviewed King, Utter, Verspoor and Youngston studies in BiOps
- No appeal by ASM of initial agency response to RFC



Amendment 13 Request for Correction

- Associated Fisheries of Maine and the Trawlers Survival Fund filed the request for correction
- Alleged that the “Revised Biological Reference Points for New England Groundfish” contained in draft Amendment 13 violate NOAA’s information quality standards
- Alleged violations predicated upon NMFS’ failure to consider alternative models for determining biological reference points



Amendment 13 RFC (cont.)

- Amendment 13 RFC denied
- As with ASM RFC, response team consisted of regional and HQ staff
- Science supporting Amendment 13 was subjected to formal, external peer review by CIE
- Highly transparent process
- Requesters appealed Agency's initial denial of RFC



Amendment 13 RFC Appeal

- Appeal was decided by Bill Hogarth with support from NER, HQ and General Counsel
- First appeal within NOAA of an initial denial of a RFC
- Agency upheld the initial denial of the RFC
- Administrative remedies exhausted – Appeal of Hogarth's decision would be in Federal court



Fisheries' DQA Implementation

- Pre-Dissemination Review and Documentation Form (PDRF) and associated Guidelines
- PDRF should be completed for all new information products disseminated to the public
- Bi-monthly meetings of Fisheries DQA contacts from each Region and Center



Recent Developments

- OMB Peer Review Proposal
 - Proposed Peer Review standards for all “influential” scientific information disseminated by the agency
 - Federal agencies will be required to amend their Info Quality Guidelines to incorporate new OMB peer review requirements
 - DOC Comments (consisting largely of NOAA comments) to OMB on Jan. 23, 2004
 - OMB released a Revised Peer Review Bulletin on April 15th
 - Final Peer Review Bulletin expected in the near future



For Further Information

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